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IMAGE/PROCESS II

VIDEO VIEWING ROOM
The Kitchen
484 Broome Street
New York City

January 1983

INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMISSION Woody Vasulka

CHACO Steina Vasulka

GREECE TO JUPITER:
IT'S A MATTER OF ENERGY Barbara Buckner

CIRCLE TWIST/
SNAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL Frank Dietrich & Zsuzsa Molnar

WITHIN Lisa Marie Sanfilipo

ORBIT Neil Zusman

HAPPY MEDIUM/
UNITY THROUGH STRENGTH Pier Marton

LEAVING THE 20TH CENTURY Max Almy

- Curated by SHALOM GOREWITZ

IMAGE/PROCESS 2 Program Notes

People often ask why the Experimental Television Center is in Owego, a small town a four hours' drive northwest of New York City. One reason is Ralph Hocking's position at SUNY Binghamton - he started E.T.C. in the early 70's. The studio is isolated - the work period is intensified by the silence. The Susquehanna River flows under the back window (on its way, incidentally, to Three Mile Island). The town is rustic, turn-of-the-century. A pastel, turquoise-painted fireman on a tall pedestal, carrying a lantern and pink-cheeked baby, greets the traveler over the girded bridge. The quietness contrasts with the electronic speed of the processing instruments; the gentle river and softness of the rounded, farmed hills contradict the pulsing blasts of high-frequency currents. Often, after a session of intensive colorization and image oscillation, the streets, especially the lights, have psychedelic flares and things appear to move in slow motion. Owego is an anchor for the spirit and mind excited by the cybernetic swirl.

Ironically, another hi-tech facility is situated in Owego: IBM has a fortress on the other side of town. It's one of their centers for military-oriented research. David Jones used to live close to the plant and spoke about futuristic helicopters being tested overhead. One day, at the Owego Diner, an IBM engineer told me about his T.V.-related work with the Cruise Missile. It's programmed with an electronic memory map to guide it to target. Using a camera as eye, it can find the 5th floor of a Kremlin building to deliver its radioactive message. Unfortunately, once launched, it can't be stopped or rerouted. Both E.T.C. and IBM are places to explore the outer limits of television possibility.

This program demonstrates a variety of approaches by artists working at E.T.C., other facilities around the country, and with personal or conventional systems.

Woody Vasulka's Introduction to 'The Commission', based on the legend of the life of Nicolo Paganini, "examines electronic processing in application to narrative genre." (Vasulka) The Kabbalistic gesturing choreographed for Robert Ashley's dance and the ritualistic measurements of the shrouded figure are especially provocative. Chaco by Steina Vasulka, a "sequence of landscapes, ancient earthworks, and changing skies, interacted through electronic keying" (Steina), is an excerpt from an as yet untitled tape. The hypnotic study becomes an auric archeology of the mysterious New Mexican landscape where she and Woody live. I'm looking forward to the article charting changes in their work since moving there and their relationship to other artists in the Southwest.

Barbara Buckner's Greece to Jupiter: It's a Matter of Energy is a cybernetically-woven tactile patterning that sometimes resembles the hallucinatory perspective of a Richard Anaskevitch painting. Buckner writes, "The square, as spatial figure, articulates time as an evolving architecture - from classical space to outer space using light energy as a building medium. The square, as archetypal figure, articulates consciousness as evolving states - from exterior awareness to interior awareness using light energy as a medium for self-knowledge." The tape was processed at E.T.C.

Zsuzsa Molnar and Frank Dietrich explore the potentials of digital design. "Circle Twist and Snake, Rattle & Roll are a computer-graphics flipbook through one small universe. A circle performing a permutation dance, exploring all of its possibilities in real time. And a sine wave gracefully undulating into the ancient oriental symbol of yin-yang, male/female." (Molnar/Dietrich). The tapes, produced in Chicago, have antecedents and corollaries in video by Stephen Beck and members of the Video Music Alliance of Los Angeles.

Lisa Marie Sanfilipo is a young video artist who lives in Rochester, N.Y. Within is an extraordinary first work that combines off-air footage, self-performance, and expressionistic camera work, washed by colors generated through manipulation of camera control units in a conventional studio. It's a study in alienation and a comment on school experience that could have been included in Over the Edge, a film about teenage rebellion. It's diaristic and directly emotional elements ally it to neo-expressionism and other energistic approaches.

Orbit by Neil Zusman, who lives in New York City and works at E.T.C., alternates film footage and electronic layering of video performance, in, according to Zusman, "a dialectical meditation on the current psycho/economic climate in America. It began as a self-portrait, paralleling my own experience as a striking video worker, fighting a lost but necessary cause. I was attacked on the picket line by union-busting goons and my life was threatened afterwards. That event changed my opinion about the future of our economic values, our ability to negotiate them, and their effect on our subconscious. I believe there will be a shift in values from abstract currency to a wealth of expanded and individual possibilities - a wealth of peace, nature, compatible technology, and continuing education. I also believe I could be wrong."

Pier Marton's Happy Medium and Unity Through Strength are disturbing collages of T.V. sounds and images fractured, reduced, regurgitated; pierced by eye-splitting manifestos and slogans. Marton works in Los Angeles, doing his processing primarily with 3/4" decks, a camera, time base corrector and character generator. "Some people make it their job to make us believe that we exist,

when, after all, a bomb is all we need. No more co-optation, no more rich vs. poor, no more questions. The media, from which all images in this tape originate, uses similar tactics. In lieu of plutonium, the vacuum tube delivers its daily bombardment of cliches...The soldiers originate from a major network sign-off; the man running, from a Spanish network reporting Archbishop Romero's murder in El Salvador." (Marton).

In contrast with the other tapes in the program, Max Almy's Leaving the 20th Century was produced at a state-of-the-art studio, One Pass Video in San Francisco. It's the first segment of a trilogy. Playing with verbal-visual interaction, the narrator recites "be calm, relax, forget, and erase..." in various languages, referring to the global permeation of television. To a synthesized percussive beat, reasons for leaving - "he's no longer entertained by post-modern society...there's nothing good on television..." The landscape devolves in a musical-visual crescendo.

For more information about these and other artists and image process tapes, please call or write The Kitchen, (mail): 59 Wooster Street, New York, N.Y. 10012/(street): 484 Broome Street, 2nd Floor/(212) 925-3615.

(notes by Shalom Gorewitz)